



LUBE TIP: BENEFITS OF A LUBE AUDIT

CURRENT REALITIES

The unfortunate reality for most companies today is that the current in-plant lube program is not something that was proactively planned out and implemented. Instead, it was a piecemeal process, developed over many years over the life of the company through the addition of new equipment, processes and personnel. As a result, any number of problems can occur:

- A large inventory of multiple lubricants, each specified for an individual application or piece of equipment.
- Loss of in-stock product and supplies (lubricant, grease guns, oil cans, fittings, etc.) due to improper handling.
- New machine warranties being tied to specific lubricants having to be used.
- Arrival of new machines that have different Automatic Lubrication Systems (ALS) already installed. They may work on a completely different operating principle from those you currently use. For example, if you had a single-line parallel system, and you fitted it with a pump designed for a single-line progressive system, it wouldn't work and you would lose bearings. Also, different systems require training and different spare parts in inventory.
- Implementation of ALS that are different due to specific objectives or results required.
- Lubrication schedules may be known by key Lube Personnel but there is no one single location where all critical information is documented.
- No "ownership" of systems, equipment or processes due to lack of training, which ultimately means it doesn't get done.



What are the objectives of a Lube Audit?

All hope is not lost for the maintenance professional, however. A Lube Audit can help, whether it's conducted for an entire plant, certain locations or processes within the plant or just on specific machines.

Step 1: Identify that there is in fact a need for an audit and the desired results or specific objectives for the audit.

Some of the objectives by which an audit can be measured include:

- Consolidate purchases from multiple vendors – reduce transaction costs, shipping cost, storage locations.
- Reduce the types/brands in stock – lower your MRO inventory investment, increase buyer power, reduce wastage and lubricant loss.
- Reduce items in stock – less shelf space and housekeeping required, easier handling of lubricants and movement of stock.
- Longer time intervals between lubricating – reduced opportunities for accidents, improved worker safety, increased production.
- Better quality of lubricant – prolonged intervals between re-lubrication, lower labour costs, less downtime.
- Identify areas where training is required – develop a more pro-active form of maintenance compared to re-active, achieve long-term gain with increased production.

Step 2: Develop a scope of work that the Lube Audit should include.

To state the obvious, the scope of work is defined by the objectives or benefits you identified in Step 1. Some tasks in the scope of work could be:

- Review all your lubricants and identify where, when and on what pieces of equipment they are used.
- Examine the lubricant handling procedures and inventory control system already in place.
- Review key production machinery with existing ALS. If there is no ALS installed, review all the lube points and lube requirements for each piece of equipment.
- If there is an ALS installed, review all the related documentation, layout drawings and service manuals for the major components.
- Work with the key lubricators/personnel to review the processes, procedures and supporting documentation.
- Review all existing training guidelines, processes or requirements and any related documentation.

- Work with key lubricators to determine potential service schedules (based on OEM recommendations, production schedules, etc.), and time allocations required to complete the lubrication tasks (safety consideration, equipment needed, is there guarding to be removed, etc.).

What results can you expect from a Lube Audit?

Time will be required to consolidate all the information received and to develop a comprehensive plan on what needs to be done - the larger the audit (plant vs. specific machine) the more time generally required. Depending upon the objectives and the scope of work, results can include:

- Identify duplication of lubricants – possible standardization
- Learn about the hidden costs of lubrication – storage, handling, improper lubrication, wastage, rush deliveries
- Learn of potential safety and environmental issues – spillage, lube disposal
- Cost out Return on Investment (ROI) of automating some of the critical production equipment – i.e. lubricating while the equipment is operating is a more efficient method with potential energy savings and increased production
- Up-date manuals as required for your current lubrication methods, ALS and processes
- Develop a customized plan of action listing the opportunities in a priority sequence

The ultimate result would be a formalized, central lubrication program that would address every aspect of a successful lubrication process, such as safety, environmental conditions, energy usage, labour, productivity etc., as illustrated in the following illustration:



This formal lubrication program would include training and would ensure consistency over the complete process, better access to information and increased ownership.

Simply stated, the clear benefit of going through the process of conducting an audit is that it moves your company closer towards implementing a proactive, fully integrated plan for reducing cost and improving productivity and safety.

Should you have any questions about conducting a lube audit, the lube solutions experts at FLO Components are just a phone call away at 1.800.668.5458.

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